

Development Question and Abundant Natural Potentials of Taraba State: The Need for Paradigm Shift

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Abstract

This paper examines the development of the Taraba state from the perspective of its untapped abundant natural resources and potentials over the years. State creation in Nigeria is aimed at bringing the government closer to the people and engendering development. The creation of Taraba state on 27th August 1991 by the military administration of General Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida (Rtd) brought hopes in the minds of its growing population for development. Taraba state grapples with its development question from the federation of Nigeria in the context of the unrealistic national development plans, programs, and policies of past successive governments. The study relies on content analysis and collected data from secondary sources. The study adopts political economy as its theoretical framework on the fact that it explains the interface between politics and economy by way of public policies on production, distribution, and consumption of economic goods and services. The study found that the Taraba state has large deposits of untapped natural resources that must be exploited to promote industrialization and agriculture in order to provide jobs to the citizens. Arguably, another major problem that undermines development in the state is the incessant ethno-religious conflicts, which claimed many human lives and scared away investors. The paper concludes with recommendations that the State Government should invest in Research and Development (R&D), produce a blueprint on the economic and natural resource potentials and the laws governing its exploration, to maximize its comparative advantage and diversify its revenue sources for sustainable development of the state.

Keywords: *Development question, Natural potentials, Political Economy, Paradigm Shift, and Taraba State*

I. Introduction

The quest for development has been the major preoccupation of post-colonial countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, loosely referred to as *Third World*. Nigeria's development after the attainment of its independence in 1960 is expected to be faster as a result of the abundance of both

human and natural resources. Despite the discovery of oil in 1959, agriculture remained the mainstay of the Nigerian economy for the first decade after independence.

The development question is multidimensional as it encompasses; development planning, development policies, human development, economic growth and development, good governance, and democratic consolidation. Hence, development is a process rather than an outcome, and it is dynamic in that it involves a change from one state or condition to another.

It is important to note that the creation of Taraba State in 1991 was aimed at bringing government and development closer to the people to ensure the inclusion of the minority ethnic groups and the promotion of democracy in the larger federation of Nigeria. The formation of new structures, institutions, and processes is directed towards ensuring that the state copes with its fundamental development questions.

Taraba State was created when Nigeria is at the crossroad of democratic transition, economic boom during the Gulf crisis, and the peak of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) under the military regime of General Ibrahim Babangida. Development today is for Taraba State to catch up and contribute to national development as expected.

In view of this study, the development question should be a focus on eradicating poverty, unemployment, and inequality to protect human rights and freedom and promoting good governance in society. According to the National Bureau of Statistics, Taraba State has ranked the second poorest state in Nigeria with an 87.72% incidence of poverty [1]. The ethno-religious crisis in Taraba state has claimed the lives of over 10,000 people with over 200,000 internally displaced persons, according to the United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees report. However, the most recurring incidence of conflict has been between Tiv/Jukun crises, which lasted for six decades [2].



It is pertinent to note that development involves ideas, as ideas rule the world. The power of ideology in development cannot be over-emphasized. This is because the policy is a slave to shifting ideologies [3].

The question of development in Taraba State must address the socio-economic, political, cultural, technological, and industrial capacity of the State in improving the quality of life of the people. To answer the question, why Taraba State remains backward in the federation of Nigeria is the main focus of this study? It is in this context that this study examined the development question of Taraba State in the last three decades.

II. Brief Historical Overview and Development of Taraba State

The history of the creation of Taraba State could be traced to the creation of the then North-Eastern State from the Administrative Division of Northern Nigerian region on the 27th May 1967, with its capital in Maiduguri. Thereafter, on 3rd February 1976, the North-Eastern States was subdivided into Borno, Bauchi, and the Gongola States for political and administrative convenience. Gongola State is comprised of Adamawa and Sardauna Provinces of North-Eastern State together with Wukari Division of the then Benue-Plateau State. This situation continued till the military government divided Gongola State into Adamawa and Taraba States in 1991.

Taraba State was created on August 27th, 1991, out of the defunct Gongola State by the then Military Administration of President Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida. The State got her name from "River Taraba," one of the three main rivers that run through the state and covers a land area of approximately 60,000 km² which makes it the third-largest in the country after Niger and the Borno States [4, 5].

The State lies between latitude 6° 30' and 8° 30' North of the equator and between longitude 9° 00' and 12° 00' East of the Greenwich Meridian. The state shares boundaries with Bauchi and Gombe States in the North, Adamawa state in the East, Plateau State in the North-West, Benue and Nasarawa State in the West, and shared international boundary with the Republic of Cameroon in the South. The population of the State in 2006, according to 2006 census figures released by the National Population Commission (NPC), was Two million three hundred thousand, seven hundred and thirty-six people (2,300,736). However, the current projection of the population of the state as at 2016 is 3 million people [6].

Taraba State is the most ethnically diverse state in Nigeria, with over 80 ethnic groups, each with its distinct historical and cultural heritage cohabiting peacefully with one another [7]. Taraba State is divided into sixteen (16) Local Government Areas and two Special Development Areas, Ngada and Ndola. There are 168 political wards and

1,912 polling units in the State. Politically, there are three Senatorial zones; Northern, Central, and Southern, and six Federal constituencies; Ardo-Kola-Lau-Karim Lamido, Jalingo-Yorro-Zing, Bali-Gassol, Sardauna-Gashaka-Kurmi, Takum-Ussa-Donga, and Wukari-Ibbi, respectively [8, 9].

III. Conceptual Clarification Development

Development is as old as civilization. Development is a highly contested concept in Social Sciences. It has no acceptable universal meaning. This is a result of the ideological and cultural differences among the scholars and users of the term. Development is not unilineal but a multi-dimensional and dynamic process. In some instances, it evolves from evolution, adaptation, and sometimes revolution. Etymologically development first appeared as the French word "*development*," from Old French *development* ("unrolling"). This was the first use in 1756, meaning that it is a 17th-century word [10].

The international career of the term development, coupled with the notion of "underdevelopment," started as a "public relations gimmick thrown in by a professional speech-writer" since President Truman merely wanted to include in his 1949 Inaugural Address a fourth point that would sound "a bit original." So from the very beginning, when the idea was first aired in international circles, no one – not even the US President – really knew what "development" was all about.

To be sure, there was some shared and genuine intention to improve the lot of the poor, viewed as potentially interesting future customers of the industrialized countries, but beyond the routine discourse on "the challenge of our times," "development" was mainly used as an excuse for enticing "developing countries" to side with one camp or the other. No wonder, therefore, that this political game turned to the advantage of the ruling "elites" who were influential in international arenas, rather than grassroots populations [11, 12, 13].

The World Development Report perceived that the challenge of development is to improve the quality of life... better education, higher standards of health and nutrition, less poverty, a cleaner environment, more equality of opportunity, greater individual freedom, and a richer cultural life [14]. Africa was firmly set in the minds of the international community following a World Bank report published in 1989, which categorically declared: underlying the litany of Africa's development problem is a crisis of governance. By governance is meant the exercise of power to manage a nation's affairs. Since then, the expression has attained the status of a mantra in the development business [15].

Development School can be divided into; the liberal, Marxist, dependency/world system, and globalization schools, respectively. However, there are other

classifications; structuralists, distributive, interventionists, neo-liberalists, and post-development theories.

Under the liberal school of thought, development is inclined to the economic domain or indices as a yardstick to measure progress. The liberal theories see economic growth and development as the basis of development. Hence, development is all about an increase in the gross domestic product (GDP), gross national product (GNP), per capita income, industrialization, high literacy level, among others. Classical liberalism started with the work of Adams Smith in the *Wealth of Nations* (1776), where the focus was on production, comparative advantage, and taxation.

According to Seers [16, 17], the question to ask about a country's development is, therefore, what has been happening to poverty? What has been happening to inequality? What is happening to unemployment? If all the three have declined from a high level, then beyond doubt, this has been the period of development for the country concerned. If one or two of these central problems have been growing worse, especially if all the three have, it would be strange to call the result "development," even if the per capita income doubled. This applies to the future too. A plan which conveys no target for reducing poverty, unemployment, and inequality can hardly be considered a development plan.

In another different liberal view, Rostow [18] sees development as the period when a society has effectively applied the range of modern technology to the bulk of its resources. He identified five stages; traditional society, pre-condition for take-off, take-off, drive to maturity, and age of high mass consumption. In most kinds of literature, this is popularly referred to as modernization theory. Rostow believes every society or country must follow these stages to be developed.

The Bretton Woods Institutions (Washington Consensus) perspectives as championed by the unholy trinity of the World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF), and World Trade Organization (WTO), otherwise known as Bretton Woods institutions, have focused on promoting policies on the liberalization of economies through; privatization, commercialization, monetization, deregulation, and devaluation. This is evident in their preconditions for the loan to developing countries that they must liberalize their economies and democratize their political systems.

Marxism has its roots in the writings of Karl Henrich Marx (1818-1883) and Friedrich Engels (1820-1895). These two scholars were the founding fathers of Classical Marxism that focuses on ownership of the means of production and revolution. To Marx, development means the overthrow of the capitalist system and the victory of the working class. Arguably, the proletariat will enforce the dictatorship against the bourgeoisie, and subsequently, the

state will wither away. Socialism will be implemented that mature into communism.

To Rodney [19], development in human society is a many-sided process. At the level of the individual, it implies increased skill and capacity, greater freedom, creativity, self-discipline, responsibility, and material well-being. A Marxist historian views Africa's and the entire colonized Third World countries' underdevelopment from the vestiges of colonialism. Underdevelopment is not defined by lack of resources but the uneven and unjust distribution of wealth of those countries.

Sen [20] observed that development requires the removal of major sources of unfreedom; poverty as well as tyranny, poor economic opportunities as well as systematic social deprivation, neglect of public facilities as well as intolerance or overactivity of the repressive state. The Third World scholar had captured the meaning of development that is all-encompassing. His conception was widely accepted among all the two major schools of thought.

IV. Theoretical Framework

The political economy started as the name for economics. During this period, there is no much difference between economics and politics. Adam Smith, David Ricardo, and John Stuart Mill are widely regarded as the originators of modern economics. However, these scholars called themselves *political economists*, and Mill's *Principles of Political Economy* was the fundamental text of the discipline from its publication in 1848 until the end of the century. These early theorists could not conceive of the economic and political worlds as separate. They are referred to as classical political economy.

Subsequently, two trends divided the political from the economic analysis. First, governments began to reduce their direct control over the economy. Second, different political forms emerged: Europe moved from almost exclusively monarchical to representative government. Hence, by the early 20th-century, economics and political science were established as separate disciplines.

Therefore, *the Great Depression* and the problems of development, the two World Wars, and the rise of fascism have compounded the questions of the development and separation between politics and economics. Arguably, these problems are economic and political in nature. It shows that politics and economics are intertwined.

The assumption of the political economy as a theory is that the economy is the based (sub-structure) upon which all other things in society stand; the law, politics, religion, and culture are determined by the economic power of the state. The Marxian Political Economy (MPE) perceives the economy as a continual process of transformation of nature and society by production. This argument originates from

Karl Marx, *Das Kapital (Capital: A Critique of Political Economy)*, 1867, to Milton Friedman, *Capitalism and Freedom*, 1962. The productive forces are central to the development of any state. The economic potentials will galvanize development.

The bottom line is the integration of political and economic factors in our analysis of modern society. Politics affects the economy, and economy invariably affects politics, which conditions development. The major ways politics affects the economy is through policies, choices, and management of institutional changes. No change can be achieved for development without understanding how economic power influences political power to effect the desired change.

Development of Development Thinking

To start with, ideas rule the world. The evolution of development thinking has a long history. What is central to the development of development thinking has been the interface between ideology, policy, and experiences. This dialectic between ideas and experience, between frameworks and outcomes, is central to the way development policy has evolved and continues to evolve. So, in fact, the problem for development thinking is to understand development in terms of the development of and interactions between state, market, and civil society (also sometimes known as "the third sector") within a specific historical and socio-political context.

The ideas of economists and political philosophers, both when they are right and when they are wrong, are more powerful than is commonly understood. Indeed, the world is ruled by little else. Practical men, who believe themselves to be quite exempt from any intellectual influences, are usually the slaves of some defunct economist...I am sure that the power of vested interests is vastly exaggerated compared with the gradual encroachment of ideas.... But, sooner or later, it is ideas, not vested interests, which are dangerous for good or evil (Keynes cited in Kanbur, [3]).

According to Kanbur [3], the development thinking in the context policy direction was roughly between 1955-1980, 1980-2000, and 2000 till date. A simple periodization will guide our understanding of the historical process of development.

- i. The 1950s-1960s (Statist model)
- ii. The 1970s-1980s (Market model)
- iii. 1990-2000 (Public-private partnership model)

The instrument for diagnosis and remedy to development is the "development planning." For instance, Nigeria has a development plan even pre-independence by the colonial government 1945-1956. This is done through the Central Development Board as directed by the Colonial Secretary of the British colonies. Subsequently, after the

attainment of independence in 1960, the first National Development Plan was introduced 1962-1968, second 1970-1974, third 1975-1980, fourth 1981-1985, and fifth 1986-1990 was not fully implemented which was later incorporated into Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP). Similarly, the rolling plan of 1990-1998 of the IBB government abandoned the five years planning and adopted the 15-20 years that would provide a realistic long term view of the problems of the country. In 1996, Abacha set-up the Vision-2010 Committee, and the report was submitted in September 1997. Obasanjo came up with NEEDS in 2003, and Vision 20:2020 added as an endless search for development planning and strategy in Nigeria. Nigeria is still left confused and suffers from a lack of an appropriate development model for national development. Taraba development is seen from the purview and periscopic understanding of the larger picture of the Nigerian state.

Finally, the quest for global development was taken over by the United Nations when the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) was launched in the year 2000. It was planned that it would achieve its 8 goals by the year 2015. This was largely unsuccessful in the global South but successful in the global North. Then, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) was launched in September 2015 to mark a transition and commence operation in 2016 on targets of 17 Goals to be achieved by 2030 tagged Global Agenda.

V. Taraba State: The Development Question

Now the question is, does a development plan for Taraba State exist? Was the plan implemented? Can we evaluate the plan based on its aims, objectives, goals, and targets? In elementary economics, economic questions revolve around; what to produce? How to produce? And for whom to produce? It will be good to add how to use the resources more efficiently on a sustainable basis. This argument is followed by the factors of production; land, labor, capital, and entrepreneur. The challenge over the years has been the entrepreneur, not the other factors. The political economy question is the interface between economy and politics in dealing with economic problems. Taraba state is not poor, but Tarabans are poor. The failure of Tarabans to harness the natural endowments and abundant potentials of the state remains a sad reality of poverty in the midst of plenty. The mindsets, beliefs, and values of a people condition their wellbeing, prosperity, and development. The political economy question here is the production and consumption mentality of the people.

A. The Economic Question

Taraba State is referred to as the "Nature's Gift to the Nation" due to its richness in culture, vegetation, and abundant mineral resources [21]. Over 75% of the population engage in farming, and very few are civil servants. The modern economy is classified into two: the resource and the knowledge economy.

a) Resource-Based Economy: This is an economy based on the availability of natural resources. The case of Taraba State is different. In 2012, the Institute of Aerospace and Instrumentation of Russia had discovered deposits of silver and traces of gold and oil in the Central and Northern parts of Taraba state [22].

b) Knowledge-Based Economy: A knowledge economy is defined as an economy that is capable of knowledge production, dissemination, and use; where knowledge is a key factor in growth, wealth creation, and employment, and where human capital is the driver of creativity, innovation, and generation of new ideas, with reliance on information and communication technology (ICT) as an enabler (Saudi Arabia, National Development Plan, Chapter five). Here, we are referring to knowledge as a critical requirement for enhancing competitiveness in the 21st Century. The knowledge factor is where the economy lies. Below is another additional classification. These later classification is still being debated among academics.

c) Religious Economy: The economy that revolves around our faith or religious bodies as means of making money or fortune. All the proceeds from religious activities is considered a new changing dynamics of the religious and economic venture.

d) Underground Economy: This is the illegal economy that people make money from it; smuggling, prostitution, drugs, among others. It is usually called underground because it is secretive and illegal, but government collects taxes or generates huge money from it.

According to the World Bank, it conceived knowledge economy into four pillars:

- i. Institutional structures that provide incentives for entrepreneurship and the use of knowledge
- ii. Availability of skilled labor and a good education system
- iii. Access to information and communication technology (ICT) infrastructures
- iv. A vibrant innovation landscape that includes academia, the private sector, and civil society.

Knowledge bank and development of knowledge is part of the global commons: it belongs to everyone, and everyone should benefit from it. But a global partnership is required to cultivate and disseminate it. The World Bank Group's relationships with governments and institutions all over the world, and our unique reservoir of development experience across sectors and countries, position us to play a

leading role in this new global knowledge partnership. We have been in the business of researching and disseminating the lessons of development for a long time.

To Powell and Snellman [23], a knowledge economy covers new scientific-based industries, knowledge-intensive industries, and the role of learning and innovation. Aristotle has identified the theoretical knowledge (thinking), productive knowledge (production), and practical knowledge (politics and leadership). Research and development is the key to the expansion of the knowledge economy hence the reliance on R&D.

There are four major sectors to the economic/development question in Taraba State not minding the Blueprint or Development Plan of the State whether it exists/existed or not:

1. **Agriculture:** Agriculture is the mainstay of the economy. Taraba is the 3rd largest in terms of the landmass of the 36 States of Nigeria. Over 75% of the land is arable. Many foods and cash crops are grown, such as; maize, guinea-corn, rice, yam, millet, sesame, cassava, sorghum, beans, and cash crops such as cocoa, coffee, tea, palm tree, cashew, mango, guava, among others. In all the sixteen (16) LGAs, different varieties of crops are grown. Even though most of the farmers are into subsistence farming, late M.K.O Abiola had invested in farming in Bali LGA of the State in the early 1980s. Recently, Africa's richest man Aliko Dangote had bought large expansive land in Lau LGA for investment in Sugar and tomatoes. The expelled Zimbabwean white farmers have been in Gassol for rice farming. Taraba State can feed Nigeria with its local rice if the technology is added. The rearing of livestock plays a central role in the economy of the State. Taraba State has the highest concentration of livestock in Nigeria, especially cattle. This is attributable to the climatic condition found in most parts of the State. The important area in this regard is the Mambilla Plateau in Sardauna LGA. It is estimated that 4.5 million cattle, 2.5 million sheep, 3.0 million goats, 6.0 million poultry, and 2.8 million pigs are reared in the State. Over 30% of agricultural products of the state are from the livestock business, which creates employment for the rural dwellers [24].
2. **Solid Minerals:** The discovery of solid minerals in the areas now under the state dates back to the colonial days in the early 1960s. However, several attempts have been made with great discoveries of varieties of solid minerals. In 2012, the Russian Institute of Aerospace Instrumentation undertook a satellite mineral survey using thermal video technology to assess the feasibility of minerals, which yielded positive results of the presence of

mineral deposits untapped. In the last 20 years, there have been different mining companies, both local and international, that have been harnessing these minerals resources legally and illegally. Some of these precious stones include; graphite, silver, barite, blue sapphire, tappaz, amataz, zinc ore, marble, laterite, iron ore, galena, copper, tomaline, manganese, gold, aquamarine, lead ore and magnetite, and oil, etc. It is discovered that Bali, Donga, Wukari, Karim Lamido, and Sardauna Local Government Areas have a long history of the production of solid minerals in large quantities. According to Daily Trust reports on illegal mining, the state government is losing over a hundred million naira daily [25].

3. **Industry:** The State Government established many industries for investment and economic development. The Taraba Investment and Properties Limited (TRIP) has over 25 subsidiary companies under it. There are many of these similar companies still existing and providing services and employment opportunities to the people. Some of these companies are: Mambilla Beverages - producers of Highland Tea, Baissa Timber Company, Viva Feeds in Zing, Tomato and Sugar Factory in Lau, Dutch Agricultural Technology Company (DATCO), Jalingo, Cassava Processing Plant, TARCMA, Taraba Gas, Taraba Micro-Finance Bank, etc. There are hundreds of local rice processing outlets, bread, pure water, shoemaking, and blacksmithing works all over the State. There are similar service providers like; commercial banks, hotels and restaurants, keke NAPEP (tricycles), and many transportation outfits in the state. These business outfits have no doubt raise the economic status of both indigenes and non-indigene living in the State, in addition to serving as sources of revenue to the State. The Jallywood movie industry is booming with its groundbreaking movies and the music industry too.
4. **Tourism:** Globally, tourism has been considered a source of revenue generation. Taraba State is blessed with different fascinating tourist attractions and potentials due to its rich historical, cultural, recreational, and geographical beautiful scenery. It is a big industry with wide-ranging investment opportunities in *Nature's Gift to the Nation*. There are site attractions like; waterfalls, curves, lakes and rivers, mountains, and entertainment, etc. Some of these tourist attractions include the following; Gashaka Gumti National Park, Marmara Crocodile Pond Wukari, Nwonyo Fishing Festival, Ibi, Chappal Wade (The Mountain of Death), Mambilla Plateau, the highest altitude in West Africa and Nigeria standing at the height of 2, 400 meters above the sea level. There are various cultural

festivals in the state that also attracts visitors and tourists to the state like; Kuchecheap, Puje, Kungana, Phepe, Mihu, Kilimbse, Mantau, Puma, Asanmu, Mazawaje, Kati, etc. These festivals help to galvanize unity among the diverse ethnic nationalities in the state. This translated into appreciable socio-political stability.

ii. **Political Question [development]**

In this context, the political question relies on the political power question and the leadership question. It is not about the separation of powers between the three arms of government or the power of the Supreme Court. Since we are dealing with development question in this context, political question connotes how the state fared in political development in the last 29 years. The leadership challenges and the unwholesome baggage associated with it.

A political leadership refers to the ruling class that bears the responsibility of managing the affairs and resources of a political entity by setting and influencing policy priorities affecting the territory through different decision-making structures and institutions created for the orderly development of the territory [26]. In their book, *Why Nations Fail*, Acemuglo and Robinson (2012) identified three factors that make nations fail, environment and geography, institutions, and choices. By implication, the geography of a place or Nation can be an advantage to the nation, and strong institutions compliments development. Critical to the environment and institutions is the choice leaders make that would galvanize development or not, which makes other nations richer and others poorer.

According to Monroe [27], the world is filled with followers, supervisors, and managers but very few are leaders. There is a common saying that; there are four types of people in the world; those who watched things happen, those who let things happen, those who asked what happened, and those who make things happen. Leaders are those who make things happen by influencing their followers. The political leadership and development of Taraba is conditioned on the historical trajectory and political dynamics of the political culture of the State. The good governance question centers on accountability, transparency, equity, justice, the rule of law, and political inclusion, among others. Important to this aspect is having strong and independent institutions.

The most important thing in the political question is the political development drive by responsible leadership that can propel good governance. Politics and political process influence development in many respects from ideology, policy, and management of the resources. The political nature of development has been ignored. Yet, any transformation in society is a political process [28].

“The trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership. There is nothing basically nothing

wrong with the Nigerian character. There is nothing wrong with the Nigerian land or climate or water or air or anything else. The Nigerian problem is the unwillingness or inability of its leaders to rise to the responsibility, to the challenge of personal example which are the hallmarks of true leadership” [29].

VI. Natural Resource Abundance of Taraba State

Taraba State is ranked third in terms of the landmass in Nigeria after Niger and Borno States. Equally, it is ranked fourth in solid minerals deposits in Nigeria. The Gashaka Gumti National Park is one of the largest in West Africa. These positive advantages must be exploited to showcase the endowments of the state to the world. The Jalingo Ultra-Modern Market Kpantinapu is not put to use since 2007 when it was built. The state loses millions in revenue, and the investments have become a misplaced priority. The media space (print and electronic) is good for investment to create markets and jobs.

The prospect is to rediscover the many potentials of the State by its political leadership. This could be achieved by investing in research and development (R&D). Moreover, Tarabans who are wealthy must also be encouraged to invest in the State. This will provide ample opportunity for more investors and boost trade and economic activities. There is a need for the creation of Taraba Investment and Technological Innovation Hub (**TITI-HUB**). This will be used for the research, development, fabrication, and trading of local patents for the State. The yahoo boys can serve as a source of tech guinea pigs for a start. We must borrow from Mazrui [30, 31] proposition that for Africa to develop indigenization, domestication, and diversification of our economies, education and cultural orientations is necessary as it was done by Asian Tigers.

VII. The Need for Paradigm Shift

Nigeria is believed to have a mono-cultural economy, which has been considered an obstacle to national development. In Taraba's state, the problem is not about the mono-economy but over-reliance on government for survival and patronage despite the meagre resources.

To unlock the potentials of Taraba State, it is both the function of political, economic, and socio-cultural factors. Our perception of the reality of the situation must change to capture the trend of events in the State's politics, economy, and socio-cultural dynamics.

The first step is the **Blue Print for the State Development Plan**. This is the function of politics through political leadership, not just administrative slogan or political campaign rhetoric.

The second step is the economic reality in terms of comparative advantage of the state in productive capacity. This involves what the state has in terms of both human and material resources to galvanize development; mineral

resources, crop varieties, tech and innovation, and arts and culture through the creative industry in music and movie such as the rising Jollywood, among others.

The third step is the cultural mix towards social integration, mechanical and organic solidarity. An African proverb said, “When two brothers fight, a stranger inherits their properties.” There is no magic bullet to peace; the government makes a law, and people make peace. We must keep silent the guns.

The challenges remain with the commitment of the political leadership to the question of the development of the Taraba state. The violence has to stop in the State in order to attract investments. The policy is a slave to shifting ideology in the State. The State must have a long, medium, or short term development plan that should be implemented in phases regardless of the person or political party in power. We must do away with the “*Garden of Aden*,” “*Dutch Disease*,” or “*Resource Curse*.” Eventually, so that we pursue the argument that *what you know is more important than what you have*. The intellectual capital that will enhance the commercialization of science.

VIII. Conclusion

This study has examined the development question and abundant natural resources to answer the development question in Taraba state. The study findings reveal that the development question is not only an economic question but also involves the political aspects determined by the choices political leaders make in terms of policy preferences against other alternatives. The culture and language influence the ability cognition in learning for innovation and technology in any society.

In Taraba state, both the resource and knowledge-based economic sectors have not been fully exploited to develop the state as expected. Since the creation of the state in 1991, the phenomenon of ethno-religious conflict has more often than not crippled or arrested the development of the state by impoverishing the populace, affecting farming activities, amplifying mutual suspicion, and above all led to the loss of lives and properties worth billions of Naira of the citizens in the state. The State Government usually channels the meagre resources of the state to the conflict resolution, rehabilitation, and resettlements of victims. Money is a coward; it doesn't go to where there is violence or war.

Taraba state is the second poorest state in Nigeria's household survey on the incidence of poverty ranking by the National Bureau of Statistics report recently released. The same story that Taraba State is the least in terms of contribution to the Internally Generated Revenue (IGR) to the national purse.

Therefore, good and responsible political leadership, politics of inclusion, and ethno-religious

tolerance will go a long way in addressing some of the internal divisions in the state that sometimes are externally imposed. There is a weak if not lack of vibrant civil society groups in Taraba state to act as a watchdog and serve as a bastion of democracy and good governance for sustainable development. Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

- i. In order for Taraba state to know or discover its un-identified potentials, there is the need for the State Government to invest in Research and Development (R & D). This is the only way to identifying and classifying the abundant potentials of the State systematically, and it will be documented.
- ii. The State Government must come up with a blueprint that would serve as a guide to investors, both local and internal. It would cover all the major sectors of the economy of the state available for investments.
- iii. Comparative advantage is important, especially in the areas of agriculture; tea farming, rice, cassava, groundnuts, and sugar cane can generate huge capital for the state. The weather condition on the Mambilla Plateau is of comparative advantage for tourism attraction. If the Mambilla Plateau is located or found in Lagos or Kano States, it would have been a different story. Let it be that their comparative advantage is boosting the tourism industry.
- iv. Diversification and domestication of investments and products from Taraba state. Our business class must be encouraged to invest in the state to invite others.
- v. Invest in education for intellectual capital development. This will lead to the commercialization of knowledge (knowledge production).
- vi. Cultural mix (melting pot thesis). Our diversity is a source of strength, not division or violence. Religious tolerance and cultural relativism. This will engender socio-economic, cultural, and political development.

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